

REMARKS

Claims 1, 4-11, and 21-31 are pending in this application.

Applicants have amended claims 1, 4-11, 21, and 25, and have canceled claims 3 and 4. These changes do not introduce any new matter.

In the Final Office Action dated August 19, 2002, the Examiner rejected claims 2-11 under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite. Applicants have amended claims 4-11 to address the antecedent basis issues raised by the Examiner. Applicants submit that claims 4-11 now satisfy the definiteness requirement of 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, and request that the rejection of these claims thereunder be withdrawn.

In the Final Office Action dated August 19, 2002, the Examiner rejected claim 1 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as being anticipated by Bersin et al. Applicants have amended claim 1 to specify that the surface of the semiconductor wafer is kept substantially dry after the plasma etching operation, and that the surface of the semiconductor wafer is scrubbed with a cleaning brush that applies a chemical solution to the surface of the semiconductor wafer. The Bersin et al. reference does not disclose the scrubbing of the semiconductor wafer with a cleaning brush after the rinsing operation cited by the Examiner. In addition, for the reasons previously argued during the prosecution of this application (see, e.g., the remarks section of the Amendment filed on May 20, 2002), the Bersin et al. reference does not disclose, either expressly or under principles of inherency, the wetting of a surface of the semiconductor wafer using a non-splash rinse technique as specified in claim 1. Accordingly, for at least the foregoing reasons, claim 1 is patentable under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) over Bersin et al.

In the Final Office Action dated August 19, 2002, the Examiner rejected claims 2-5 and 9-11 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Bersin et al. in view of Gockel et al. The Gockel et al. reference does not disclose or suggest the wetting of a semiconductor

wafer using a non-splash rinse technique. As such, the Gockel et al. reference does not cure the above-discussed deficiency of the Bersin et al. reference relative to independent claim 1. Thus, claims 4, 5, and 9-11, each of which depends from claim 1, are patentable under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) over the combination of Bersin et al. in view of Gocket et al. for at least the reason that neither reference discloses or suggests the wetting of a surface of semiconductor wafer using a non-splash rinse technique as specified in claim 1.

In the Final Office Action dated August 19, 2002, the Examiner rejected claims 6-8 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Bersin et al. Each of claims 6-8 ultimately depends from claim 1. In light of the changes made to claim 1 herein, Applicant submits that the Bersin et al. reference no longer supports an obviousness rejection of the subject matter defined in claims 6-8.

In the Final Office Action dated August 19, 2002, the Examiner rejected claims 21-24 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Lo et al. in view of Gabriel. Applicants have amended independent claim 21 to specify that the surface of the semiconductor wafer is scrubbed with a cleaning brush that applies a chemical solution to the surface of the wafer. As neither the Lo et al. reference nor the Gabriel reference discloses the scrubbing of a wafer with a brush that applies a chemical solution to the surface of the wafer, Applicants submit that the combination of Lo et al. in view of Gabriel does not support an obviousness rejection of claims 21-24.

In the Final Office Action dated August 19, 2002, the Examiner rejected claims 25-31 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Gockel. Applicants have amended independent claim 25 to specify that the semiconductor wafer received from the plasma etching operation is substantially dry, and to specify that the method further includes scrubbing the surface of the semiconductor wafer with a cleaning brush that applies a chemical solution to the surface of the wafer. Applicants submit that the Gockel reference

would not have suggested to one having ordinary skill in the art the method defined in independent claim 25. In particular, Applicants note that the Gockel reference does not disclose or suggest the receiving of a semiconductor wafer that has been subjected to a plasma etching operation where the wafer is substantially dry. The Gockel reference also does not disclose or suggest the features specified in claim 25 relating to the positioning of the liquid outlet (see the Amendment filed on May 20, 2002 for detailed arguments in this regard). Accordingly, Applicants submit that the Gockel reference does not support an obviousness rejection of claims 25-31.

In view of the foregoing, Applicants respectfully request reconsideration and reexamination of claims 1, 4-11, and 21-31, as presented herein, and submit that these claims are in condition for allowance. Accordingly, a notice of allowance is respectfully requested. In the event a telephone conversation would expedite the prosecution of this application, the Examiner may reach the undersigned at (408) 749-6902. If any additional fees are due in connection with the filing of this paper, then the Commissioner is authorized to charge such fees to Deposit Account No. 50-0805 (Order No. LAM1P109).

Respectfully submitted,
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